<http://www.lifeissues.net/writers/kas/kas_01overpopulation.html>

It's a day like any other. Your child comes home from school with an assignment. Only today, the assignment is to detail the problems that "overpopulation" is causing the world's ecosystem.

And part of this assignment is to “educate” you about the world's population "problem."

What do you do? Do you go along with what s⁄he's being taught? After all, this is what you've been hearing on television and in the newspapers for decades. Or do you have some counter–arguments? Might you, in fact, need to defend yourself and your child from a very real threat? You should be aware that the question of "overpopulation" is no longer merely a topic of conversation, if it ever was. It is a burning matter of policy and action at the local, national and international level. Our national government is actually committed by law and by international agreement to reducing the worldwide rate of population growth.

Government spokesmen, such as Ambassador Timothy Wirth, insist that this effort must also apply to the population of the United States. Your chances of having grandchildren depend on whether and how this program is carried out. In many countries already, governments sterilize and abort their citizens by force, often with financial help from the United Nations, the United States and government–supported private agencies such as Planned Parenthood.

There are many government policies that make it difficult for families to bring children into the world, and for those children's fathers to support them and their mothers to stay home and raise them. Those policies include levying heavy taxes on families with children, discrimination against men in the job market, building codes and land use restrictions which increase the cost of housing, regulations which discourage productive activity. The groups which have supported these policies have plainly stated their intent to reduce population growth.

The United States government and the United Nations have promoted sex education in the schools, teaching children that there are too many far too many people in the world. The programs teach that abortion, sterilization and contraception are necessary to reduce "excessive" population growth.

If you familiarize yourself with the myths surrounding "overpopulation," you'll be in a better position to defend yourself and your family against these idealogical threats.

**Myth 1:** The world is overcrowded and population growth is adding overwhelming numbers of humans to a small planet. In fact, people do live in crowded conditions, and always have. We cluster together in cities and villages in order to exchange goods and services with one another. But while we crowd together for economic reasons in our great metropolitan areas, most of the world is empty, as we can see when we fly over it. It has been estimated by Paul Ehrlich and others that human beings actually occupy no more than 1 to 3 percent of the earth's land surface.

If you allotted 1,250 square feet to each person, all the people in the world would fit into the state of Texas. Try the math yourself: 7,438,152,268,800 square feet in Texas, divided by the world population of 5,860,000,000, equals 1269 square feet per person. The population density of this giant city would be about 21,000 somewhat more than San Francisco and less than the Bronx.

Another fact: World population growth is rapidly declining. United Nations figures show that the 79 countries that comprise 40 percent of the world's population now have fertility rates too low to prevent population decline. The rate in Asia fell from 2.4 in 1965–70 to 1.5 in 1990–95. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the rate fell from 2.75 in 1960–65 to 1.70 in 1990–95. In Europe, the rate fell to 0.16 that is, effectively zero in 1990–95. And the annual rate of change in world population fell from 2 percent in 1965-70 to lessÊ than 1.5 percent in 1990–95.

Worldwide, the number of children the typical woman had during her lifetime (total fertility) fell from 5 in 1950–55 to less than 3 in 1990–95. (The number necessary just to "replace" the current generation is 2.1.) In the more developed regions, total fertility fell from 2.77 to 1.68 over the same period. In the less developed regions it fell from more than 6Ê to 3.3. Total fertility in Mexico was 3.1 in 1990–95. In Spain it stood at 1.3, and in Italy, it was 1.2.

Official forecasts of eventual world population size have been steadily falling. In 1992–93, the World Bank predicted world population would exceed 10 billion by the year 2050. In 1996, the U.N. predicted 9 billion for 2050. If the trend continues, the next estimate will be lower still.

**Myth 2:** Overpopulation is causing global warming. The message that is most likely to arouse the fervor of young people is that overpopulation is destroying the environment and the biosphere. On this point, the first thing to keep in mind is that some of the most beautiful parts of the world, with the highest environmental quality, are in densely populated countries such as western Germany, which has more than 600 persons per square mile, and the Netherlands, which has almost 1200 persons per square mile, compared with 330 in China. Several myths promote the belief that we are engulfed in an environmental catastrophe. For instance, Vice–President Al Gore and some scientists say population growth is causing global warming. But there is much disagreement in the scientific community about this. Seventy–nine scientists issued the "Leipzig Declaration" in 1995 saying ". . . There does not exist today a general scientific consensus about . . . greenhouse warming . . ." Additionally, the satellite readings of global temperature, available on the NASA Web site at www.nasa.com, do not show a warming trend. And further, respected climatologists such as Hugh Ellsaesser, Richard S. Lindzen and Robert C. Balling vigorously dispute the notion of a global warming danger.

**Myth 3:** Overpopulation causes ozone depletion. Like global warming, the cause and significance of the so–called ozone "hole" is a matter of intense scientific dispute, although the United States and other nations have agreed to reductions in the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which were alleged to have caused it. S. Fred Singer, an atmospheric physicist who participated in the earliest ozone measurements, calls the ozone scare a "misuse of science." In fact, many think the chief function of the CFC ban has been to help big chemical companies establish highly profitable new monopolies on the CFC substitutes which they developed.

**Myth 4:** The world's forests are disappearing because of overpopulation. This is an important matter because forests are an essential part of the world's environment and, therefore, humanity's well–being. The Psalmists spoke in awe of the cedars of Lebanon. Today we know that trees inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen, which means that they are a first line of defense against air pollution and the specter of global warming. The world forested area, estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. (FAO), currently amounts to four billion hectares, covering 30 percent of the land surface of the earth. Few people realize this is the same figure as in the 1950s. In the United States, vast forests cover a third of the land, according to the U.S. Forest Service. That's equivalent to two–thirds of the amount of land that was forested when the Europeans arrived in the 1600s. This acreage has not declined since 1920. In fact, annual forest growth today is more than 3 1⁄2 times what it was in 1920. Two–thirds of the nation's forests are classed as timberland, capable of producing at least 20 cubic feet per acre of industrial wood annually. Another fact: Trees are growing 33 percent faster than they are being cut.

The highest volumes of growth occur on privately–owned forest industry land, while the government–owned national forests, where the trees are older, have the lowest volumesÊ of tree growth. The National Wilderness Preservation System grew from nine million acres in 1964 to 96 million acres in 1993. But this is not enough for the environmentalists of The Wildlands Project, who hope to turn fully half of the land area of the United States into wilderness areas inhabited by grizzly bears, wolverines and mountain lions, and make it off–limits to humans. There has also been great agitation about the "destruction of the tropical rainforests." Someone has claimed that an area twice the size of Belgium is now being logged worldwide each year, but people don't realize Belgium could fit into the world's tropical forests 500 times, and in the meantime, the rest of the world's trees 99.6 percent of them are continuing to grow. One of the greatest of theseÊ tropical stands exists in Brazil, with more than half of the forests of South America. FAO and Brazilian government figures suggest that logging takes about two-tenths of oneÊ percent of forest acreage per year, and in 1993, Brazilian forests covered 58 percent of the country's total land area. Such figures hardly suggest a catastrophic decline. Another thing that's misleading is that FAO figures show a "decline" in forest cover even when forest land is appropriated for use as public parks, and not a single tree is cut down. And if in fact some deforestation is occurring in Brazil, it can scarcely be the result of overpopulation; Brazil has less than half as many people per square mile (31.2) as the world average (101).

**Myth 5:** Air pollution is the result of overpopulation, and acid rain, a byproduct of air pollution, is destroying lakes, rivers and forests. In fact, air and water pollution levels have been highest in the centrally–planned economies of Eastern Europe and China, where population growth is low or negative. Legendary air pollution in Poland and Russia has occurred in areas with thinly–settled populations. In the United States, air pollution is declining significantly. The federal government's National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program recently reported "no widespread forest or crop damage in the United States" related to acid rain.

**Myth 6:** Many plants and animals are disappearing because of the growth in human numbers. There is absolutely no scientific data whatsoever to support this claim. Even a scientist such as David Jablonski, who believes species will decline, says, "We have no idea how many species are out there and how many are dying." Some species, such as blue whales, spotted owls and blackfooted ferrets, have been found to be more numerous than was once thought. Since many species exist in forests and the earth's forest cover is remaining about the same, the claims of massive species extinction appear doubtful.

**Myth 7:** Overpopulation is threatening the world food supply. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, world food supplies exceed requirements in all world areas, amounting to a surplus approaching 50 percent in 1990 in the developed countries, and 17 percent in the developing regions. "Globally, food supplies have more than doubled in the last 40 years . . . between 1962 and 1991, average daily per caput food supplies increased more than 15 percent . . . at a global level, there is probably no obstacle to food production rising to meet demand," according to FAO documents prepared for the 1996 World Food Summit. The FAO also reported that less than a third as many people had less than 2100 calories per person per day in 1990–92 as had been the case in 1969-71. At present, farmers use less than half of the world's arable land. The conversion of land to urban and built–up uses to accommodate a larger population will absorb less than two percent of the world's land, and "is not likely to seriously diminish the supply of land for agricultural production," according to Paul Waggoner, writing for the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology in 1994.

**Myth 8:** Overpopulation is the chief cause of poverty. In reality, problems commonly blamed on "overpopulation" are the result of bad economic policy. For example, Western journalists blamed the Ethiopian famine on "overpopulation," but that was simply not true. The Ethiopian government caused it by confiscating the food stocks of traders and farmers and exporting them to buy arms. That country's leftist regime, not its population, caused the tragedy. In fact, Africa, beset with problems often blamed on "overpopulation," has only one–fifth the population density of Europe, and has an unexploited food–raising potential that could feed twice the present population of the world, according to estimates by Roger Revelle of Harvard and the University of San Diego. Economists writing for the International Monetary Fund in 1994 said that African economic problems result from excessive government spending, high taxes on farmers, inflation, restrictions on trade, too much government ownership, and overregulation of private economic activity. There was no mention of overpopulation.

The government of the Philippines relies on foreign aid to control population growth, but protects monopolies which buy farmers' outputs at artificially low prices, and sell them inputs at artificially high prices, causing widespread poverty. Advocates of population control blame "overpopulation" for poverty in Bangladesh. But the government dominates the buying and processing of jute, the major cash crop, so that farmers receive less for their efforts than they would in a free market. Impoverished farmers flee to the city, but the government owns 40 percent of industry and regulates the rest with price controls, high taxes and unpublished rules administered by a huge, corrupt, foreign–aid dependent bureaucracy. Jobs are hard to find and poverty is rampant. This crowding leads to problems such as sporadic or inefficient food distribution, but this problem is caused as in Ethiopia by that country's flawed domestic policies.

It is often claimed that poverty in China is the result of "overpopulation." But Taiwan, with a population density five times as great as mainland China's, produces many times as much per capita. The Republic of Korea, with a population density 3.6 times as great as China's, has a per capita output almost 16 times as great. The Malaysian government abandoned population control in 1984, ushering in remarkable economic growth under free market reforms, while Ecuador, Uruguay, Bulgaria and other countries complained at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo that though they had reduced their population growth, they still had deteriorating economies.

**Myth 9:** Women and men throughout the world are begging for the means to control their fertility. Not so, according to reports from such places as Bangladesh, Africa and the Philippines. The fact is, surplus condoms and birth control pills fill warehouses in the less developed world and women flee the birth control workers and beg to have their implants and IUDs removed.

U.S. foreign assistance law requires countries receiving American foreign aid to take steps to reduce population growth [you can find this in 22 U.S. Code, sec. 2151–1; 22 U.S. Code, sec. 2151(b)]. Far from meeting an "unmet need" for birth control, foreign–supported family planners in India, Bangladesh and other countries must pay, or force, their clients to accept it, according to reports from these countries. Foreign–supported population control is so unpopular in Bangladesh that riots over this issue prevented the prime minister from attending the International ConferenceÊ on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994.

Dr. Margaret Ogola, a Kenyan pediatrician, disputed the claim of "unmet need" for family planning at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. She said that foreign aid givers have lavished pills, condoms and IUDs on hospitals and clinics in Kenya, but that simple medicines for common diseases remain unavailable. A United Nations survey of abortion and birth control policies throughout the world found that high proportions of women were familiar with and were using "traditional" methods (NFP) of limiting births.

In 1981, the typical Bangladeshi woman was having seven children during her lifetime; since then the number has fallen to 3.4. According to Bangladesh press reports in 1994, the secretary of health acknowledged that "coercion, blackmail [and] abuse of payment provisions" were problems in the population control program. Alarmed by extremely low fertility, South Korea reported to the International Conference in Cairo that it has slashed its government expenditures on birth control. Singapore, faced with below–replacement fertility, reported that it now offers tax rebates to couples with more than two children. Government–supported "family planning" agencies in the United States, such as Planned Parenthood, claim their services save public assistance costs. In fact, published research has shown that states which spend large amounts on birth control subsequently have higher costs of public assistance. Research also shows that states which require parental consent for a minor to have an abortion have lower rates of adolescent pregnancy.

**Myth 10:** Overpopulation causes war and revolution. The most war–torn continent on earth Africa is also one of the least densely populated, with about half as many people per square mile as in the world as a whole. Bad governments, propped up by ineptly and unjustly managed foreign aid, are more probably the root of strife.

The worldwide movement which promotes population control is not small or weak. It is a powerful alliance of United Nations agencies, national governments, foundations and "nongovernmental organizations." It commands many billions of dollars in resources. Its members include family planning agencies, radical leftist environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund, development planners, international financial institutions such as the World Bank, foreign relations agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, and "research" organizations such as Worldwatch Institute. Its ideology increasingly dominates school and college instructional programs and textbook publishing.

Ultimately, however, its power rests on public ignorance in countries such as the United States. For the billions of people who inhabit God's creation, and for the billions more He intends it for, it's up to us to find out the truth about "overpopulation," and to share it with as many people as will listen.